

Original Research Article

Knowledge and awareness of women's visiting to the gynaecology department and nursing staff towards cervical cancer

Sharmila Amol Dange¹, Jaywant Yashwant Aher²

¹Assistant Professor, Dept. of Obstetrics & Gynecology, SMBT Institute of medical sciences and research centre, Dhamangoan, Nashik., Maharashtra, India

²Associate professor, Dept. of Obstetrics & Gynecology, SMBT Institute of medical sciences and research centre, Dhamangoan, Nashik, Maharashtra, India

***Corresponding author**

Dr. Jaywant Yashwant Aher

Abstract: The estimated rate of screening of the cervical cancer is very low in India, but the load of the patients is high. Various studies had shown that the nurses were very important in educating the common public and play an essential role in the enlightenment of the community regarding the need and availability of Pap smear. It is important therefore to understand the practices and perceptions of nurses and women's about cervical cancer. The study was done among the women's visiting to the gynaecology department with some complaint and the nursing staff of the SMBT medical college, Dhamangaon, Ghoti, Nasik. The study was consisted of 178 women's and 43 nursing staff and the study was done over a period of six months. The study was done using 14 questionnaires and all the data was collected, tabulated and statistical analysis was done with the help of IBM SPSS statistics version 20 using student's t test. On comparison of the knowledge and awareness (KA) scores of the women's visiting to the gynaecology department and the nursing staff, it was found that the nursing staff (9.72 ± 1.86) was having more awareness as compared to common women (8.04 ± 1.89) and the difference was found to be statistically significant. Nurses' knowledge and awareness plays an important role in cervical cancer screening and the utility of screening. Thus, it will ultimately help in improving the health of the community in future.

Keywords: Cervical cancer, Knowledge and awareness, Nursing staff

INTRODUCTION

Cervical cancer is the second most common cancer among the women worldwide and India holds one-fourth of the total global burden of the cervical cancer [1, 2].

Cancer of the cervix is a malignant neoplasm arising from cells originating in the cervix uteri. One of the most common complaints of cervical cancer patient is abnormal vaginal bleeding, but in some patients there may be no obvious symptoms till the cancer has progressed to an advanced stage [3]. Registered nurses are the most visible, frontline personnel providing health education to patients and the general population [4].

Knowledge and awareness regarding the cervical cancer can lead to early diagnosis and best possible protection against cervical cancer.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was done among the women's visiting to the gynaecology department with some complaint and the nursing staff of the SMBT medical college, Dhamangaon, Ghoti, Nasik. The study was consisted of 178 women's and 43 nursing staff and the study was done over a period of six months. Ethical committee approval was taken before start of the study and informed consent was recorded from each of the participants. The study was done with the help of specially prepared questionnaires consisting of 14 questions regarding the knowledge and awareness regarding cervical cancer, its etiological factors, signs and symptoms, screening methods, treatment options, etc. All the data was collected, tabulated and statistical analysis was done with the help of IBM SPSS statistics version 20 using student's t test.

RESULTS

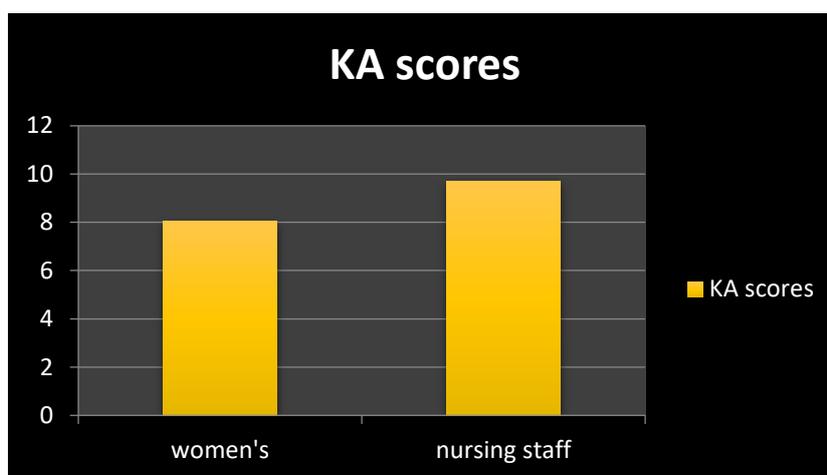
On comparison of the knowledge and awareness scores of the women's visiting to the

gynaecology department and the nursing staff, it was found that the nursing staff (9.72 ± 1.86) was having more awareness as compared to common women (8.04 ± 1.89) and the difference was found to be statistically significant. (Student's t test, $p < 0.001$) Though the nursing staff was having more knowledge and awareness than the nursing staff, the overall score of the

nursing staff was low. As nursing staff are the preliminary source of information to the common public, they must be having total knowledge and awareness regarding the cervical cancer, so that they can create awareness among the common public. (Table 1, Graph 1)

Table-1: Comparison of the scores of the women's and nursing staff regarding the knowledge and awareness of the cervical cancer

Group	Number of participants (n)	Score Mean \pm SD	T value	P value
Women's	178	8.04 \pm 1.89	5.2455	<0.001
Nursing staff	43	9.72 \pm 1.86		



Graph-1: Graph showing comparison of the scores of the women's and nursing staff regarding the knowledge and awareness of the cervical cancer.

DISCUSSION

Cancer is a term used for malignant uncontrolled growth of cells and tissues [5]. Cervical cancer is a malignant neoplasm arising from cells originating in cervix uteri. It may be completely asymptomatic in early stages. In advanced stages, it may present as persistent pelvic pain, unexplained weight loss, bleeding between periods, unusual vaginal discharge, bleeding, and pain after sexual intercourse. Infection with human papillomavirus (HPV) types 16 and 18 cause 75% of cervical cancer globally. Other risk factors include tobacco consumption, multiple sexual partners, early age of sexual intercourse, increasing parity, prolonged use of oral contraceptive pills, and sexually transmitted diseases [6].

Because nurses play an integral role in educating women in prevention of diseases and health promotion, they influence cervical cancer screening adherence and health activities among most women. Moreover, it has been shown that recommendation of cervical cancer screening to individuals by medical professionals, including nurses, effectively improves screening coverage among the general population.10-15 [7].

The risk factors for cancer are modifiable factors such as tobacco use, unhealthy diet, infectious agents like human papilloma virus, hepatitis B virus, helicobacter pylori bacterium, ultra violet radiation, physical inactivity, occupational exposures, food contaminants e.g. aflatoxin, ionizing radiation, obesity. Nonmodifiable risk factors include ageing, ethnicity, heredity, sex, immunosuppression and reproductive factors [5].

There are many factors related to the development of cervical cancer. These include infection with high-risk human papiloma virus (HPV), early sexual debut, highparity, multiple sexual partners and co-infection with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). Chlamydia trachomatis, herpes simplex virus type-2, immunosuppressants, and certain dietary deficiencies are also known to be associated risk factors for HPV infection [8].

Three-fourths of women will be infected with HPV at least once in their lifetime, and abnormal cervical cytology is a common presentation (Parkin *et al.*, 2002). Early detection of cervical cell abnormalities

by Papanicolaou (Pap) smear has reduced the risk of cervical cancer development by allowing timely response to abnormal changes in cervical cytology. Detection rates of squamous cell abnormalities improved with the use of liquid-based thin prep testing of cervical cells, which was approved by the US FDA in 1996 and has now become standard practice internationally [3, 9].

Cancer screening using the Pap smear can identify precancerous and potentially precancerous changes in cervical cells and tissue. Treatment usually consists of surgery (including local excision) in early stages, and chemotherapy and/or radiotherapy in more advanced stages of the disease [3].

CONCLUSION

Nurses should be well-informed about the cervical cancer and their screening methods. Their knowledge and awareness plays an important role in cervical cancer screening and the utility of screening. Thus, it will ultimately help in improving the health of the community in future.

These findings provide a baseline and will likely prove helpful in the development of training materials for nurses.

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